

AMERICA'S
CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

ESTABLISHED 1971

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in order of seniority

July 31, 2014

The Honorable Thomas E. Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Received & Inspected

AUG 18 2014

FCC Mail Room

884

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We write to respectfully request that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) halt its current rulemaking proposal to repeal the Sports Blackout Rule. The elimination of this rule may unnecessarily upend the broadcast television model and limit the availability of valuable programming to all Americans.

Many constituents in our communities depend on free, over-the-air television for news, entertainment and sports, including NFL games. According to a 2013 survey, 60 million Americans – 41% of whom are minorities – rely exclusively on over-the-air (OTA) television. An estimated 22% of African American, 23% of Asian, and 25 % of Latino households are OTA reliant. Many of these households include lower-income adults and seniors, who cannot afford the rising cost of pay-TV services.

We are concerned with the FCC's proposal to eliminate the sports blackout rule and undermine the ability of sports programming, particularly NFL games, to remain widely available on free television. Without this rule in place, cable and satellite television providers would potentially be able to undermine contractual agreements between professional sports leagues and broadcast networks that both support attendance at games and improve the viewing experience for fans in the stadium, as well as those watching at home.

We believe the current system works well, especially for fans that rely on broadcast television. During the 2013 season, 99% of NFL games were sold out and broadcast on free, local TV. Moreover, the NFL is the *only* sports league that makes available *all* of its games, both regular season and playoffs, on free television. Moreover, these live events are not only the most watched programming on television, but also support jobs, businesses and taxes for local communities.

The FCC first adopted its rule nearly 40 years ago to support broadcast television and keep professional sports programming available to all Americans. We continue to fully support this goal and are concerned about changes to broadcast rules that may negatively affect our constituents and potentially reduce the availability or quality of television programming they can access. Therefore, we respectfully ask that you suspend the rulemaking proposal to repeal the Sports Blackout Rule.

Sincerely,


Member of Congress


Member of Congress


Member of Congress

Member of Congress




Member of Congress


Member of Congress


Member of Congress



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Member of Congress





OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Marcia Fudge
U.S. House of Representatives
2344 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Fudge:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

As you may know, the Commission has acknowledged that repeal of the FCC's rules alone may not end blackouts, but it would leave carriage issues to privately negotiated arrangements.

I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable G.K. Butterfield
U.S. House of Representatives
2305 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Butterfield:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

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Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable André Carson
U.S. House of Representatives
2453 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Carson:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Donna M. Christensen
U.S. House of Representatives
1510 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Christensen:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Yvette Clarke
U.S. House of Representatives
2351 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Clarke:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

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Tom Wheeler



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THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Emanuel Cleaver
U.S. House of Representatives
2335 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515;

Dear Representative Cleaver:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

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Tom Wheeler



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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Danny K. Davis
U.S. House of Representatives
2159 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Davis:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Al Green
U.S. House of Representatives
2201 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Green:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Robin Kelly
U.S. House of Representatives
2419 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Kelly:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

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Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Donald Payne
U.S. House of Representatives
103 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Payne:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Bobby Rush
U.S. House of Representatives
2268 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Rush:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

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Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Frederica Wilson
U.S. House of Representatives
208 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Wilson:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views on the Commission's pending proceeding regarding the sports blackout rule. I appreciate hearing your concerns regarding the Commission's proposal to eliminate the rule.

Please be assured that we have conducted an open and transparent proceeding to collect additional data, including comment on the specific issue you raised about whether games would remain available on over-the-air television if the rule were eliminated. Commission staff has reviewed the record and carefully considered all of the issues and arguments raised. Taking the record into consideration, the Commission unanimously voted today to eliminate the sports blackout rule at its Open Meeting.

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Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler